

A HISTORY
OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF
BRADDOCK'S MILL LAKE
1955 - 1990

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With considerable help
from Richard Denton and
Robert Bradel

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Forward

It is now 35 years since nine families comprising the Braddock's Mill Corporation signed up to purchase Braddock's Mill Lake. The two prime movers were probably the Bradels and the Dentons. We still live at the lake and maintain our interest in the area and in maintenance. Because of our interest, it fell on these two families to try and preserve the area as defined by our Covenants and in spite of contrary desires by some of the residents. The situation seems analogous to the present situation with Congress where the vast majority want to "throw the bums out", but not their local representative. Here at the lake, many want to "preserve the area", but their little project is surely not going "to do any harm".

Fortunately, the Braddock's Mill Corporation has passed the ownership of the common area and lake bottom to the Conservation Association which is doing a good job of maintaining the area and enforcing the Covenants. The Bradels and the Deritons have settled down to enjoy such time at Braddock's Mill as is remaining to them. We hope that the history which follows will provide present and future residents not only with the history but also the sense of dedication and purpose that has produced what is one of the best ecological lake developments in South Jersey.

In addition to the history, you will find two of Virginia's most appropriate poems and a copy of a publication our daughter found in Maine pointing out the advantage of screening vegetation near the water's edge in filtering out nutrients before they reach the lake.

This history is provided to all residents by Virginia and Richard Denton. lot# 7, 35 Borton's Road.

Introduction

As you will see from the story that follows, the development of Braddock's Mill Lake was a true leap of faith on the part of nine families agreeing to form a corporation in order to purchase the tract of pineland then known as "Mechling Lake".

There was quite a bit of effort and some risk involved in this endeavor since none of us had any experience in managing an unusual real estate development. Initially we did not know one another, and we had to learn as we went along, both about the business of being amateur developers and about ourselves as well.

So, on to our story.

Bernice Bradel and a friend, Louise Ulrich, were guests at lunch at Cedar Run, the home of Betty and Jim Woodford. The early part of the day had been devoted to field botany--plants and shrubs at Cedar Run and at an adjacent lake owned by the Mechling family of Moorestown.

The conversation led to discussion about the possibility of buying the Mechling property. The Ulrichs wanted to buy the entire property and it was agreed that they would contact Harrison Mechling, the executor of the Mechling estate about that possibility.

Harrison Mechling agreed that he would like to sell the property at a price of \$100,000 (remember this is in 1955 dollars). This cost made the Ulrich drop the idea. (They subsequently purchased a 32 acre piece of ground at Cedar Run from Betty Woodford).

Shortly after this, Bernice and Betty had a discussion about the property with Mrs. Caro Larsen, a local realtor, and Bernice's name went into Mrs. Larsen's prospects' file.

In the meantime, partly as a result of Mrs. Ulrich's inquiries and with a recognition that a market might be developing, Harrison Mechling had made a firm decision to put the Mechling lake on the market. He was a longtime friend of Emerson Darnell who had done legal work for Mrs. Larsen, and both Emerson and Mrs. Larsen's son, Carter, were schoolmates of Harrison. Further,

Mrs. Larsen's realty location at the junction of Taunton and Lake Pine, was ideal.

Out of all this, it was logical that Mrs. Larsen would be the perfect realtor to handle the property. She promptly called Bernice and Betty and many others whom she thought might have an interest. The Bradels met with Mrs. Larsen at the first of several years of meetings and agreed to recruit other families that might have common interests. These included the Bothens, the Bradleys, the Langrans and the Mossbergs, all of whom later became members of the corporation. The Bowers family was also invited to take part but did not feel that they wanted to be involved at that time.

Mrs. Larsen also added a number of prospects and in the early meetings at Medford Firehouse, there was mostly curiosity and very little serious involvement. When it became apparent that real money would be needed, the group was reduced substantially, and the meetings shifted to Mrs. Larsen's house. It was at this stage that the Denton family met Mrs. Larsen and she invited them to join the group.

Virginia Denton's Story

We had been looking for acreage in the Pine Barrens beginning in 1955 so that we would have a safe and legal place to picnic, enjoy the pines and, hopefully, to swim.

We looked within a 15 mile area of Haddonfield but could not settle on anything in our long search. But one of the real estate people we called in answer to her advertisement for Pine Barrens' acreage, was Mrs. Caro Larsen who lived in Lake Pine at the border of Taunton Lake. On hearing our story, Mrs. Larsen asked us if we would like to join a group of people who were trying to buy a lake and 169 acres of surrounding woods owned by the Edward Mechling estate in Moorestown. She told us how to drive to the lake, about three miles from her home, and suggested we look it over and get back to her if interested. (I know she must have had a sly smile as she said that: who wouldn't have been interested?).

So, Richard and I drove down a few days later. At that time, the two mile road from Hopewell Road, called West Centennial Road, went through the Centennial development done some ten years

previously so that there was paving for about one and a half miles. Then the paving abruptly stopped and became a lightly graveled road for about a quarter mile when it narrowed down to a one lane sand road ending at Borton' s Road. It was intimidating with clouds of sand, bushes leaning in and potholes making a corrugated surface. (I subsequently learned that not many Centennial residents had ever ventured "that far"!).

Turning to the right, we followed about a block and went to the left over a very narrow, rattley bridge, and saw a lightly cleared area with a white house and a log cabin style boathouse just beyond. Stretching westward, was a beautiful lake, utterly empty and clear.

The opening into the clearing by the house was very narrow and soft sand (which we learned to view with wary eye since it was as bad as snow to get stuck in) covered the area. We drew up to the side of the house we had seen and as the motor was turned off, and the quiet settled around us, we both had the conviction that somehow we wanted to be a part of this development.

There was another small house on a little hill to the right so we walked over the clearing, peering at a dam which we trusted would hold us, and went to see that area. We passed persimmon trees on the right, tossed grape vines out of the path, saw lilacs at the porch of the house and realized from the overgrown vegetation that the place was quite old, though in good condition. The doors were locked and the windows were boarded up. But the entire area was cleared of the usual huckleberry underbrush, leaving stately pines and cedars to dot the landscape. We walked about and came to the edge of a hollow where sand had been removed in great quantity to make a bathing beach some 15 ft or so down to the water.

We were so impressed with the care taking and beauty of the area that we immediately drove back through the narrow roads to Mrs. Larsen's home where we asked her about the lake's history and development.

Mrs. Larsen's home was (and still is) located by the stream feeding into Lake Pine from Taunton. There was at that time a huge cranberry storage building--three storied, white clapboard--

next door to her own 100 year old building. (The cranberry building burned down about 1966 in a spectacular fire.)

It was interesting to enter Mrs. Larsen's home from the wide, long porch edged with lumps of old Barrens-made glass. Everything seemed out of plumb and with the wide boards, covered in hand hooked rugs, the building showed its age.

Mrs. Larsen's apartment to the right of the entrance contained a mixture of summer furniture with good antique tables spotted about. Paintings of the pine woods were on the walls and Victorian lampshades helped to give a pleasant glow to the room. We subsequently spent many pleasant hours with her there.

Mrs. Larsen was about five feet tall. She was a former teacher and was now an energetic real estate agent: who was deeply involved in preserving the Pine Barrens from massive housing developments. According to Mrs. Larsen, the property was owned by the Edward Mechling family in Moorestown who, on the death of Edward, was interested in selling to someone who was not a land developer, who would maintain the land as it was and who could afford to retire the mortgage at the rate proposed.

The situation appealed to us very much and we were invited to attend a meeting of the group at Mrs. Larsen's that very night. So in the summer of 1956, we began the first of many, many meetings to get acquainted and hammer out various ideas each of us had on buying the Mechling lake.

We became very familiar with the trip from Haddonfield at nighttime through Marlton, past the Nike site (now a housing development opposite Cherokee High School which did not exist then) and onto a long two and a half mile stretch of lonely road through the cranberry bogs (the present Tomlinson Mill Rd.) to Mrs. Larsen's home. Fog frequently hid the obstacles such as cows from the farm at the corner of Kettle Run Road and Tomlinson. The large farmhouse and barn were subsequently burned down as a fireman's exercise after they were repeatedly vandalized. Very seldom did we meet another car. Most of the Medford and Medford Lakes traffic went via Tuckerton Road. The narrow, high-crowned Tomlinson Mill Road. was avoided, particularly in winter when it iced up and cars slid into the deep ditches at the sides.

The cranberry bogs at each side of Tomlinson Mill Rd at the present location of Kings Grant, were a great joy to see in fall months. Their berries floated on top of the water which had been flooded into the bogs and a scarlet carpet was created which was edged by the yellow bushes and trees along the sides. We have many pictures of the glorious fall colors there.

Lightfine's Mobil Station at the corner of Tomlinson and Taunton-Hopewell Roads was a welcome sight as we drove down from civilization to the meetings. We will never forget the quality of the air around Mrs. Larsen's home. It was perfumed by the pines, but also damp--almost as if one were encased in a gentle, cool, pine-oiled shower.

We met the members of the group as planned. By this time seven families were interested enough to accept the fact that money would have to be pledged. (This is called "getting down to the nitty-gritty").

Bob and Bernice Bradel, Joe and Mary Langran, Earl and Mildred Higginbotham, Sture and Bibi Mossberg, Claes and Inga Bothen, Malcolm and Helen Bradley, Adolph and Emma Stokes made up this committed group. Richard and I made numbers 8 and 9 and then Mrs. Larsen came in by pledging her 10% commission. This made ten investors in all to meet the \$100,000 asking price.

Night after night we met with the interested group. From the minutes of that time--yes, we elected a secretary and other officers to handle the business meetings--one can sense the hesitation of the group to commit themselves to such a large purchase with unknown companions. The Dentons were the odd people out.

We had come lately to the meetings, had never attended a bird watchers group and knew nothing of the Barnes Foundation's program for nature lovers which had been the basis for the friendship among many of the other seven families. We had a different outlook on the project since while we wanted to be a part of it because of the beauty of the area, we also perceived the business obligations of such an endeavor with a varied investing group. We happily found out as time passed that the entire group were quite hard-headed financially and no problems ever surfaced.

There were some meetings when other couples came, but then dropped out. Mrs. Larsen asked Emerson Darnell to join the corporation. He felt he could not do this, but he represented us in the negotiations with the Mechling family. The group was incorporated as a New Jersey Corporation, but was changed to a Sub-S Corporation which existed until it was finally closed out in 1990. Bob Bradel and Dick Denton served as president and vice-president respectively during the entire life of the corporation.

There were long discussions of what purchase offer and plan we should make to the Mechlings. Additional discussions were made about the future of the land. There was a complete consensus of the desire of all to maintain the lake and its surroundings as a minimally developed "green acres" concept. I guess, knowing our aims, the Mechling family was very patient with us as over a year rolled by!

We finally made an offer of \$90,000 to the Mechling estate and were overjoyed when the offer was accepted. There were then some anxious moments when the time came for all members of the group to put their checks into the pot. But no one hesitated and so we were on our way!

Emerson Darnell described the history of the lake and its area to us and we knew the mill that was originally there was called after the ubiquitous "Braddock" whose name is found all around this area. So, it became very easy to name our new purchase: Braddock's Mill Lake. Settlement was made in December 1957.

Our chief competitor for our lake was the Burlington County Girl Scouts. They made an unsuccessful bid and when we bought the lake, they switched their interest to the lake and 287 acres which lies at the western end of Braddock's Mill Lake. Candlewood Lake, as it was called, is separated from Braddock's Mill Lake by an earthen dam which has a right of way over it for Braddock's Mill Lake members to cross from the south and/or north sides of our lake to the other side. A small area of the Girl Scout: land lies on the Braddock's Mill Lake side of the dam and there is a small bit of land owned by Braddock's Mill Lake on the Girl Scout side. (This reminds one of a hostage situation). We once tried to trade off these bits but nothing came of the idea.

The Mechling family had used the lake and kept it in excellent condition for many years. They issued identification cards to their friends who could use the facilities, but these cards went to circles beyond their intention and were abused. Strangers began to fish, swim, boat and remove greenery throughout the area. The family kept a carpenter, hired to keep the two houses and the boat house in repair and to clear the accumulated brush from the dam and its overflow. But they could not police the acres.

The houses on the property predated the Civil War and the one on the hill had been a store. At one time there had been a seven house town beyond the dam which had been built to provide power to an up-and-down sawmill.

Emerson told us that in addition to the lumber cut by the mill, the making of charcoal was carried out in many areas and charcoal pits resulting from this are found in many places around the lake. The house nearest Sawmill Road was believed to have been the home of families engaged in the operation of the mill. A bit of this history was unfolded to Betty Woodford who had a discussion with an elderly gentleman who came to see the lakebed after the flood in 1958. His name was Anderson, and he told her that he had lived in that house as a very young man.

We deeply regretted the necessity to bulldoze the two houses in later years. They had become a haven for beer parties and after having several forest fires in the area, we dreaded a time when a fire might start there. The trespassers not only broke into the houses regularly, but they also ripped off wood to make beach fires for their parties. At the time we decided to take the houses down, there were no people living at that end of the lake to act as guardians. Our first house was built in 1958 at the far west end. In 1958-59 our group had very little discussion about developing the land. We all wanted to own part of the land bordering the water and there was endless discussion as to who should have what particular piece and how the waterfront lots were to be assigned. Joe Langran, a member of the group, was a landscape architect with offices in Philadelphia. He made a map of the lake and its surroundings with the sand roads in existence at that time, curving willy-nilly through the acres. No attempt was made to make the little drawing more than to convey the sense of the land and the lake. We walked the land over and over and,

knowing there were many prime spots, we teased each other about what part we each would want when and if we ever decided to split the land up through deeds.

For the first two or three months, we thought we could share and share alike in the joy of owning the entire tract. A shock occurred however when we received the town's revised tax bill. We found that the tract was now assessed at the selling price to us and no longer at the low woodland rate paid by the Mechlings. This meant an increase in annual cost to our members of over \$2000 which, perhaps foolishly, we had not anticipated.

We have always felt the township was short-sighted. The tract was still woodland, we did not plan to develop it, and at that moment in time, we did not plan to split it up, amongst ourselves, that is. We made a protest to the assessor's office and got no-where. There was then only one way under the corporation setup to raise such money and so we asked for yearly contributions from each corporate member. This met with dismay.

So, we were forced into the real estate business, after all. Taxes steadily increased and land had to be steadily sold to pay them. But by keeping the land sales to large acreage and having a good architectural committee, our goal of "green acres" was pretty much achieved.

Fortunately, our first plat plan, laid out by Earl Higginbotham, was approved by the township and there came the Bowers to the rescue.

Friends of the Bradels, the Bowers had chosen not to join the original group, but Bob and Bernice kept after them to stay interested. They liked the area and came to the conclusion that they would like to buy a lot now that the township had approved the Braddock's Mill Lake lot design.

Finally, a day of real exploration to decide on a piece of ground was set up with the Bradels. They trudged from one lot to another, comparing size, shape, location, trees and everything else in the world. At the end of the exhausting day, the Bowers decided on lot #9 at the end of Borton Road where it joined what is now Braddock's Mill Court.

Having no paper on hand for a sales contract, the old Indian formula of settling a deal was chosen: an impressive tree was picked out and all four members of the party spit on it, which made it signed, sealed and delivered.

The group continued the meetings at Mrs. Larsen's home becoming deeply involved in creating the "aims and intentions" for our land and also the "covenants" to go with the deed. There were many long discussions on the covenants, but Emerson's expertise on what we could or could not include steered us well. The group's determination to maintain the lake as it was finally welded into the covenants which are still used over thirty years later.

It wasn't until almost a year after we bought the land that we finally divided part of the lake front among us. Choices were purely off the record and did not entail any registering of deeds until the results were approved by all of us. There were many meetings where we discussed exhaustively our favorite spots with all of us somewhat dancing around the issue of just which one piece we actually desired. We used the map Joe had drawn up from Earl Higginbotham's survey which made use of the almost perfect demarcations between lots, hollows, drainage ditches, roadways, etc.

One memorable night, we faced up to the problem. We put our choices by lot number on slips of paper and put them into a bowl Mrs. Larsen provided. The point of this initial selection method was to get an honest reflection of which pieces of land would be chosen and eliminate those pieces over which there was no problem-hopefully reducing problem choices to the minimum. We all really did fear that there might be an immense schism which might jeopardize the cohesiveness of the ten of us.

Much to our pleased surprise, when the numbers were read from the slips withdrawn from the bowl, lot #4 was the only duplication in 10 choices. So, we had dreaded, as is so often true, a non-existent problem.

The choice of #4 by Joe Langran and Sture Mossberg was immediately settled with Joe graciously moving to #5. So, we finally put to rest the worries over the land. All lots were subsequently surveyed by Earl and the individual deeds made up

and recorded by Emerson Darnell. Lots 1 & 2 were kept open and not on the selection list.

#3 Claes and Inga Bothen - The Bothens came to the U.S. from Sweden in 1953 when the Hoeganes Sponge Iron Plant was built in Riverton, N J. Claes was the financial officer.

#4 Sture and Bibbi Mossberg - Sture was the manufacturing manager for the Hoeganes plant. He and Bib bi came to the U. S. from Sweden in 1953. They now live in Eugene, Oregon.

#5 Joe and Mary Langran - Both Langrans are landscape architects and Joe was a partner in the Philadelphia firm of Wheelright, Stevenson and Langran. Joe also taught at the Barnes Foundation in Philadelphia. They now live in Crisfield, Maryland.

#7 Richard and Virginia Denton (see #25) - The Dentons have their own high vacuum technology company in Cherry Hill. Virginia is now retired; Richard is semi-retired.

#.11 Bob and Bernice Bradel - The Bradels were living in Morrisville, Pa. at the time the corporation was formed in 1957. Bob was purchasing agent for the RCA record division in New York. After transferring to RCA corporate staff. in Camden and Cherry Hill, N J, they built on Braddock's Mill Court in 1968.

#10 Earl and Mildred Higginbotham - Earl was the engineer for Burlington County. The Higginbothams are now retired in Beverly Hills, Florida.

#19 Adolph and Emma Stokes - Adolph worked for the consumer products division of RCA, first at Cherry Hill and later at Indianapolis, Ind. He died in 1986 and his wife now lives at Bell's Lake near Turnersville, N.J.

#20 Mrs. Caro Larsen - Mrs. Larsen was a real estate broker in Taunton Lakes. After a long career in this area, she moved to a retirement home in California where she died in 1968.

#24 Malcolm and Helen Bradley - Malcolm was a vice president with Meredith Paving in Burlington, NJ. Helen taught school in the same district. Malcolm died in 1980 and Helen has moved to New Hampshire.

25 Virginia Denton - see #7 with Richard

One of the most difficult times in the life of the corporation arose before it was even one year old. August 1958 was a very wet month and toward the end of the month there were three days of solid rain ending in a very big storm. This extremely heavy downpour overflowed and washed out three upstream dams. Marlton Lakes went first, plunging into Pachoango. Then both went into Candlewood and all three combined to flow into Braddock's Mill Lake. Our dam was overwhelmed and the entire earthen section alongside the concrete center wall and its wings collapsed and spread out into the area in back of the dam. Trees were uprooted, debris piled up and the pipe which normally carried the water under the dam was scattered downstream in bits and pieces.

The water poured through the woods, continuing into Centennial Lake. Since their level had been rising steadily, the alert was sounded to open the dam valves and to bring soldiers from Fort Dix who piled sandbags on top of the dam to gain height. One can imagine the problem Taunton Lakes and Lake Pine would have had if the Centennial dam had given way.

Virginia will never forget the shock of seeing the devastation at the lake that August day. She had loaded a bunch of Cub Scouts into the station wagon to come down from Haddonfield for a swim. When she drove into the beach area, there was no water to swim in, just mounds of sand and uprooted trees at the edge of a desert. She could not grasp what had happened to the lake until Ruth Bowers appeared and told her of the previous night's devastation. The boys had a lot of fun rooting around the trees toppled over and rescuing fish from the little pools that had formed therein!

The members met to assess the damage and quickly agreed to move ahead with a new dam as soon as plans could be drawn and approvals secured from the state. The new structure was made by Amos Allen and had a center core of clay with turf laid down on both front and back slopes. The safety overflow was widened and the leading portion, lakeside, was black topped.

The debris from the flood was cleaned up and bulldozers were brought in to deepen areas where possible. The lake bottom was amazingly clear of tree stumps and had white sand everywhere around the Kettle Run stream which bordered the south shore.

Another surprise was the discovery of some of the framework of the old sawmill still in place in the pond behind the dam.

While working on the lake bottom, we soon learned that the muck at the edges could be certain traps for bulldozers. One bulldozer sank into the driver's seat and Eph Tomlinson had to pull it out with his dozer, coming over from Candlewood where he was cleaning up that lake.

Much of this muck is caused by groundwater coming up into the lake as small springs. The lake has two major sources of water: Candlewood Lake is formed by the stream known as Kettle Run which originates in Marlton Lakes and flows eastward. After darning up the water for their use, it comes into Braddock's Mill through two of their dams.

The second source is known as Slab Branch Creek coming through Little Mill Country Club. It flows between lots 9 & 10 (Shannons and Salernos). Since this stream is so small (although never running dry) Little Mill has agreed they will not draw water from it for irrigating their fairways. We have tested the water also for possibly having too much fertilizer in it, but the tests have proved negative.

As time went on, a group was formed which would bring all property owners into an association which would become the central point for local activity and would take on the responsibilities of the corporation when it ultimately closed down. By-laws were drawn up and the group was incorporated within the state of N.J. as the Braddock's Mill Conservation Association. Membership was limited to individuals and/or families owning property in the Braddock's Mill Lake tract.

In 1973, the corporation deeded to the Association, the piece of ground at the dam end of the lake (east end) for community purposes. The property_ contains slightly over two acres, has a good beach and swimming area and provides access to the lake for all owners.

A log cabin type boat house was on the property in 1957 and for many years canoes, rowboats and even sailboats were stored in it. But the structure deteriorated over the years, became a haven for raccoons and was torn down in 1990. The Association installed new canoe racks at that time.

The second and final transfer of property came in 1986 when the lake bottom was deeded by the corporation to the Association. This included the island in the lake opposite lot 8 (DeSimone's).

This transaction was accompanied by an agreement between the corporation and the Association spelling out the details of the property transfer and outlining duties and obligations that the Association would assume from the corporation. These basically were the enforcement of the Covenants applicable to all properties in the

Braddock's Mill Lake development. These Covenants are attached to all deeds.

The transfer of the lake bottom was done after all of the original tract was sold. The introduction of Pinelands legislation in 1979 added much red tape and bureaucracy to land transactions and as a consequence the last property sales were made as acreage rather than as individual lots. Of course, the same Covenants applied to these sales.

Now the time had come where accounts were settled, reports were made, and in the year 1990, the last statements were issued which finally closed out the corporate existence.

The Conservation Association is continuing with a set of by-laws, has established itself financially and is well prepared to cope with the ongoing events that will surely happen at Braddock's Mill Lake.

All of the corporate members can look back on this venture with much pride in preserving a unique and wonderful area where beauty, nature and privacy have all been maintained in the fashion we had hoped for when this began more than thirty years ago.

Happily, we at Braddock's Mill Lake have postponed the "Rape of The Barrens".

THE RAPE OF THE BARRENS

Walk down the torn and twisted earth
Where new-made roadways broaden out
The paths of deer, there since birth
Of pines and barrens set about
Old lakes and trees are felled whose
Withstood great fires' searing rout.

What came from water, sand and pine
Through centuries of "let it be"
Is razed for all our children's' time
By Boards' plans for "reality";
Now paved roads and for-sale signs
Destroy the pineland's harmony.

We weep too late for woodland gone;
For paths of sand for walkers' way,
With glimpse of flowers barrens-grown;
For smell of pines on summer's day,
And sight of birds who called this home
On lakes where otter used to play.

All lost by Boards who say, "You may"!

ADDENDUM

FLORA AND FAUNA

(Expanded by Bob and Bernice Bradel)

Thirty years ago, this area was truly wild. Centennial Lake was the last outpost of civilization. No one lived at Braddock's Mill, or the Girl Scouts (Kettle Run), or Pachoango or Marlton Lakes. Together these properties contained over 1,000 acres of relatively unused ground.

The birds were not city birds. There were Herons, seagulls, hawks, overflying flocks of geese, whistling swans and predator birds of several kinds. We did not see robins, cardinals, sparrows or what Virginia calls "gentler birds".

These days we see robins, blue jays, towhees, chickadees, cardinals, catbirds, thrashers, woodpeckers, whippoorwills, goldfinch, nuthatch, wrens and an occasional hummingbird. And the quail (bob white) are seen crossing our roads frequently.

There were fox, owls, deer (but in lesser quantities) and raccoons along with an occasional skunk.

The noise level of the local wildlife was at a very high level. Betty Woodford once counted 365 consecutive calls of the whippoorwill. The frogs made such a din at nightfall that it sounded like a drumbeat. And the high flying geese twice a year flew overhead with such honking it sounded like a wild dog pack in the near clearings.

Early owners fed the raccoons to the tune of 15 some nights and were rewarded with the chattering sound they made as they begged. Squirrels foraged on the bird feeders to such an extent that one frustrated owner shot at some and hit his birdfeeder instead.

Snapping turtles lived in the lake and a trapper asked if he could continue to harvest them as he had done when the Mechlings owned the lake. He sold the meat to Campbell Soup Co. and the Philadelphia restaurants for making "snapper" soup.

Pickereel was 95% of the fish harvest with Dick Wurster, Betty Woodford's son, having landed probably the largest ever caught--a full 27'' in length. Later, we all contributed (1988) to Sam DeCou's program for putting bass fingerlings into the lake.

In the beginning, the lake was free of weeds and Emerson Darnell has said that as a boy he swam off the beach where he did not hesitate to drink the water. It was in the early 60's that the weeds began to multiply, possibly feeding on pollution from an increasing population all along the water ways.

Botanical information has been gathered in the area by a good number of students. The Philadelphia Botanical Society has been the recipient of much information on the lake's makeup. Material found here has been used by Dr. Wherry in his book on wildflowers. The Pinelands Garden Club has had an ongoing interest in the botany of this area with some Braddock's Mill members participating in studies at the Barnes Foundation in Philadelphia.

Going back many years, it appears that this was a bountiful area for gathering holly and laurel. Now with housing all around, our laurel and holly are slowly coming back after too many years of free-for-all cutting.

Lady slippers appear now and then, and mushrooms have been harvested over the years, by Sophia Jenkins in particular.

Some areas, such as lot 2, have a lovely soft grass about six inches high. This is pine grass and as the wind blows through it, it looks like tir wheat fields. Arbutus frequently peeks up through the pine grass and curly grass fern can be spotted.

The dominant trees in the area are pine and oak with some cedar or juniper along the water's edge mixed with sour gum. The pines are generally ordinary Jersey pine, "Pinus Rigida", but occasionally you see yellow pine, an excellent lumber tree. Red pine also grows quickly and dies quickly.

Around homes and in areas that have been planted (Sawmill cul-de-sac for example) white pine can be found. It does very

well in this area but does not grow naturally. It is an excellent tree, usually growing straight and tall with a light green color in the needles.

It has been reported that the Civilian Conservation Corps planted rows of trees in the 1930's on the north side of the lake. These are quite large now and are probably yellow pine.

The oak trees in this area are predominantly chestnut oak, almost always with multiple trunks. Other oaks are white, black and the low growing scrub oak. All make good firewood.

Cedar, sour gum, and swamp maple are often found along the water's edge. And there is a swamp magnolia on the Mackenzie's lot.

Sassafras grows like a weed and if unobstructed, will grow to a pretty good height. Persimmon is found as well as sycamore.

An interesting holly--*ilex glabra*--grows along the water's edge. Wild azaleas are often nearby.

Much of the area is covered with huckleberry with its large seeds. High bush blueberries are found on some lots and low bush blueberries and teaberry are prolific. *Clethra* appears with a pleasant fragrance in July, oftentimes being referred to as sweet pepper.

Braddock's Mill area has its fair share of South Jersey bugs. The ticks, greenhorns, deer flies, chiggers, mosquitos, termites and roaches all have to be contended with. And the trees are attacked everywhere by gypsy moths and inch worms.

If one accepts these invasions as natural and just pays the bills for their eradication, life can be acceptable.

But it takes constant vigilance and personal care to defeat the onslaughts. Each season has its upward surge of bugs and, depending on one's personal attraction to any one of them, going out into the woods can be miserable!

Our lake produces clumps of bog iron and if one harvests them, the stones make a nice addition to a garden path, an outdoor fireplace or steppingstones. It is amazing to think of Stony Mount, one mile from here, westward, as being made up entirely of

this iron. The geology of its birth must be fascinating. The Dentons have a small pile of large bog iron pieces they salvaged from the store which was bulldozed. These rocks made up the foundation of the store and have hardened on exposure to the air. They are just piled at the edge of the woods but make an interesting focal point to that area. One easy way to detect initial bog iron being formed is by the small oil slick on the water at the lake's edges. The slick is iridescent in the sunlight.

SPRINGTIME

Oh, welcome sweet June at Braddock's Mill Lake!
The laurel is lighting the darkness of trees.
The full leaved foliage is fresh in its green
And makes shadows on walkways crisscrossed by the bees
Who are coated with pollen as they honey are taking?
From blueberries carpeting the Pine Barren leas.
The tree frog is heralding its springtime return
And nights are enlivened by whippoorwills' song.
The lightning storms clear the brush quickly by burning
But centuries-old pines which in pinelands belong
Withstand the fierce fire and the regrowth of ferns
Brings promise of life as soon as it's gone.
The jack-in-the pulpits thrust up their pink pouches
And native azalea waft sweet their white petals.
The wintering birds have flown north in their bunches;
Now orioles' shimmer like some golden metal.
Oh, spring here is beauty; my heart, it soft touches
As briefly it glows, then into summer it settles.

Braddock's Mill Conservation Association Member Property Map

